

U.S. Army Engineer Museum

Fort Leonard Wood, MO

SAMPLE CORPS DAY OF HONOR SPEECH

Tonight, we celebrate the Corps Day of Honor. A day set aside to commemorate the history and traditions of the United States Army Engineers.

We can look back in our history at over two centuries of Engineer heritage and honor. In the spring of 1636, a group of men and women got together in Massachusetts to organize for their common defense, to protect their farms, their villages, their very lives. They created the Massachusetts Colonial Militia.

Today the Mass Colonial Militia comes down to us through history through the lineage and the traditions of the 101st Battalion of the Massachusetts National Guard. The oldest unit in the Army, an Engineer Unit.

In celebrating this history of American Military Engineering, we must celebrate the continual tradition of selfless sacrifice. Traditions established in the beginnings of the Corps. Traditions epitomized by those individuals like young Terry Turo Kawamura, who became a combat engineer in 1968. His first duty assignment was Southeast Asia. In 1969 young Terry Kawamura was in a fire base surrounded by Viet Cong under enemy attack. He was awakened in his hut when an explosion blew the roof off. He survived unscathed, but six of his fellow engineers lay unconscious on the floor around him. He grabbed his rifle, made it to the door ready to engage the enemy in action, then he noticed the enemy had thrown in a second satchel charge that went through the gaping roof and landed on the floor among his buddies. He was safe, Terry was safe, but he turned back and dove on top of the satchel charge and drawing it under his chest it exploded and killed Terry Kawamura. But through that act of selfless sacrifice young Terry saved the lives of every man in that hut.

Another example of this tradition of selfless sacrifice among Engineers soldiers is found again in the story of SGT George Libby, who in North Korea in 1950, began the treacherous withdrawal to the Pusan perimeter. SGT Libby in the tradition of that selfless sacrifice, gathered men around him, wounded, the lost, and placed them in an artillery prime mover.

Aware that there was only one man capable of driving that unique vehicle, the only vehicle available to him, he felt it was his mission to guard that driver, so he used his body as a shield standing on the running board outside the drivers door, as they drove crashing through road block after road block set up by the North Koreans and the Chinese.

Stopping along the way to pick up more retreating and wounded soldiers, SGT Libby although wounded numerous times, would pick them up and drag them into the Artillery prime mover. Finally after crashing through seven road blocks, the vehicle full of the wounded men that SGT Libby so longed to protect, arrived at the Pusan perimeter. Upon arriving SGT Libby died, he gave the last measure of devotion.

Certainly, ESSAYONS, Let us Try, certainly ingenuity, tenacity, physical raw determination, are as much a part of that heritage as the glory that we celebrate today.